

PRESERVING THE PURITY OF PROGRESSIVE HOUSE: AN INTERVIEW WITH DARIN EPSILON



It is not an exaggeration to say that Darin Epsilon is doing more to protect the purity of Progressive House music than most DJs on the planet. As a genre, Progressive House has undergone a significant identity crisis, and the term is used to describe everything from Nick Warren to Avicii. But if you spend a few hours listening to Darin Epsilon's recent live recording at The Avalon in Hollywood or his set at Insomniac's Nocturnal Wonderland, it's possible to learn a good deal about what, at its core, Progressive House really is. But you have to listen, and listening takes patience and diligence. That stuff is hard. It demands from us an intrinsic desire to invite music into the body and mind so that it can swirl around, touch our souls, and leave us feeling better about the world. In many ways, listening to a set by Darin Epsilon is like reading a good novel. Unfortunately, in an instantly connected world where most of our reading material occurs in 140 characters or less, that is asking a lot from mainstream audiences. But there's one maxim that has remained true regarding our relationships to music: the higher the level of experience, the more thoroughly enjoyable the reward. Although Darin Epsilon is an outspoken critic of the direction dance music is going, his most powerful lessons occur within his music production. His music does the real talking.

Darin Epsilon is also a pragmatist and understands that if his message is to carry on, he

needs a platform with which to promote it. He has been signed to a number of elite labels including Armada, Perfecto, and Hope Recordings. His tracks "Detour on 44" is in the fraternity of the best tracks produced in 2011. His own label, Perspectives Digital, recently surpassed its two-year mark, and his Soundcloud page recently racked up its 500,000th play. Nick Warren himself selected Darin Epsilon's new track "Shine The Light", which is set to drop on January 28th, to feature on his forthcoming mix album Renaissance Presents Nick Warren – The Masters Series.

On New Year's Eve, Darin Epsilon will be headlining one of the biggest New Year's parties on the planet, White Wonderland, in Anaheim, California. He will be at the helm to usher us in to 2013, and as Dance Music progresses, it's good to know that Darin Epsilon will be the first thing people hear in what's lining up to be an epic year.

On New Year's Eve, you will be headlining White Wonderland alongside Above & Beyond, Ferry Corsten, and Dash Berlin. How do you prepare for events like this? What goes through your head?

I've been thinking a lot about what I'll be playing at White Wonderland lately. I believe it's always best to over-prepare for a high-profile gig like this. This pretty much applies to any kind of performance: whether it is music, sports, public speaking, or whatever else. Getting out there in front of so many people can be extremely nerve-wracking (even the pros feel it sometimes), so I've been practicing as much as possible before the big day.

The real challenge with DJing is that it is meant to be improvisatory, as opposed to rehearsed (e.g. a classical music concert). A DJ's job is to read the crowd, decide what works and what doesn't, and go with the flow.

Nowadays, you hear a lot about pre-recorded mixes and performers "faking" it, but I feel it's extremely important for a DJ set to preserve the element of spontaneity and unpredictability. That's what separates electronic music from any other kind of music out there.

You have your label, Perspectives Digital. Do you have any New Year's resolutions for it? What do you plan to do differently in 2013 that you didn't do in 2012?

The biggest challenge with owning a label is to keep it running. There is a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes, which most people probably don't even realize.

I'm really pleased with how much the label has grown since 2010. This year, we licensed our music to the top brands in dance music, including Bedrock, Armada, Ministry of Sound, and the American DJ family of companies. I hope to keep the momentum going into 2013 with even stronger releases and higher profile artists.

What are you excited about right now in the world of Dance Music? What DJs do you have your eye on for 2013?

In terms of DJing, I feel like unfortunately everything has been seen and done before. The market is so oversaturated with DJ's right now that it's not even possible to make a name for yourself unless create a big hit in the studio. I might even go as far to say that there are too

many producers out there as well. Just looking at Beatport, for example, they are regularly adding thousands of new tracks every week in each genre.

Live PA is most likely the new frontier that will be instrumental in pushing the genre forward. We might even see the resurgence of bands. Remember how cool it was when you went to your first Prodigy, Daft Punk, Underworld, or Chemical Brothers concert in the 90's?

You have been able to remain very true to the roots of underground dance music. As a producer, how do you balance the ever increasing demand for more commercial dance tracks while also maintaining that kind of musical integrity for which you are known?

I can respect and appreciate all different kinds of music, but I've always stuck to what I felt was unique and inspiring at the moment. They call it being an "artist" for a reason. Sometimes I feel like the term gets used too freely, and there are probably too many people in the industry that don't even deserve that title. Ironically, I've actually experienced far more success and recognition for being different and staying true to myself.

To what extent do you as an artist have a responsibility to educate new dance music fans about House Music? Do you ever reach a point while producing music where it's counterproductive to think too much about what your fans will think?

It's funny you brought this up because I am actually having this issue with my latest track 'Cosmic Discovery'. My music is generally very atmospheric and moody, so when I made this really upbeat and energetic tune, I got some mixed responses about it on Facebook.

I generally don't play this game of being close-minded. There are those techno or trance purists that will never stray from what they like, which I think is a real shame. As an artist, I feel it's necessary to branch out and explore different emotions and sounds from time to time.

The reality is, I know I'm never going to please everybody. There's always going to be people that dig my work and others that don't. The most important thing for me is to create quality music, regardless of what genre it's in.

There's a lot of talk about what's wrong with dance music today. What's right about it, in your opinion?

The music is reaching far more people, far more quickly, than ever before. Whichever side of the fence you're on, that could only be a good thing.

Anything you'd like to add?

Thanks so much for inviting me do this interview! For your readers, I'm extremely easy to get a hold of, so if you ever have any questions for me, please don't hesitate to get in contact.

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